

WAR-TIME
MEMORIES
IN VERSE

WRITTEN WHILE OVERSEAS
:: BY ::
SIGNALLER FRANK P. DIXON



Published By His Mother

NINETEEN HUNDRED and THIRTY-SEVEN



Not whole?



Signaller Frank P. Dixon

Regt. No. 1250206

10th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery

Son of William John and Ellen M. Dixon, Elkhorn, Manitoba

Born April 16th, 1898, at Elkhorn

Died of Wounds August 29th, 1918; Aged 20 Years

Foreword



1914 — 1918

MANY Years ago a mother gave her son in the service of his King and Country. He died in Flanders' fields—greatly loved, sorely missed and mourned.

¶ He left for her many treasured memories—a few trinkets and personal belongings, and his written thoughts. As he saw, as he felt, so he wrote—and his words have been treasured as only a mother's love can treasure such things.

¶ For her they will ever be "A Fragrant Memory," as of the perfume of a rose; that lingers on long after the blossom has been plucked and died.

¶ In the hope that they may recall for others something of the joys of his youth, his mother offers them to you.

ELLEN M. DIXON



“THE LIFE”

—Dec. 24, Winnipeg.

A soldier's life's the life for me
 It has all others beat.
 They have my deepest sympathy,
 The fellers on the street.

 They slave away the livelong day
 To garner in the coin
 To keep the well-known wolf away,
 And make the both ends join.

 They have to go without a show
 To salt a yen away.
 They like to feel it's there you know
 Just for a rainy day.

 WE do not worry any more,
 We tell care to vamoose.
 That's what they pay the colonel for
 So what to-ells the use.

 He has to clothe us from our feet
 Up to our dizzy dome.
 And rustle up the grub to eat,
 And find us all a home.

 He makes us keep our faces shone
 And weekly take a bath ;
 He tries his best to keep us on
 The straight and narrow path.

 While slowly we increase in girth
 Our troubles seem to fade ;
 The only care we have on earth,
 Is when we next get paid.

“THE ARMY ALPHABET”

A's for the army boots we Tommies wear,
 Of nails they have more than an ordinary share.
 B's for the beef that's invariably tough
 (Between you and I it is terrible stuff).
 C's for the cig. that's expensive no doubt,
 But a comforting pal that we can't do without.

D's for my dugout, depressing and damp,
Creator of chilblains, the flu and the cramp.
E's for the energy nobody's got,
Except when a parcel arrives on the spot.
F's for the flag that we're going to back,
Till Germany bows to the Union Jack.
G's for the glad eye we give (I've heard say)
To all the French lassies we meet on our way.
H's the place that is not on the map,
Where the sergeant consigns every thick headed chap.
I's for the ice, we complainingly break,
Before in a pail our ablutions we take.
J's for the jam, always apple and plum,
If we ever get strawberry three will be a scrum.
K's for the kit bag with which we have tried
To pack all our worries and troubles inside.
L's for the licking the Kaiser will get,
Though we haven't succeeded in catching him yet.
M's for the mud that forms part of the stew,
And clings with a wonderful fondness to you.
N's for the note that the president sends,
When ships from the States come to mystical ends.
O's for old Bill, my particular mate,
Who swears like a trooper when dinner is late.
P's for the pip, which you generally get,
When the meat tin draws blank and the weather is wet.
Q's for the quids we receive in our pay,
Though we can't extract many from ninepence a day.
R's for the rum which is one of the things,
That to us poor Tommies some jollity brings.
S's for soap, a forgotten commodity,
If you have a bar, you're considered an oddity.
T's for tanks made expressly for Fritz,
They frighten the poor blighter out of his wits.
U's for the U boats that sail o'er the sea,
(There aren't as many as there used to be.)
V's for the view that we get from our trench,
It's really enough all good humor to quench.
W's for the willies, both little and great,
And I think you'll agree that Haig's got 'em check-mate.
X strikes the heart of the author with dread,
He can think of no more so Y trouble his head.

"ON GUARD"

As I was treading along my beat
What do you think I chanced to meet?
A man dressed up in lieutenant's clothes;
'Twas the orderly officer, I suppose.

The wind was cold, and so was I,
So I says to myself "I'll let him pass by";
My rifle was hung o'er my back in a sling,
And I didn't salute or do a darned thing.

And say! Do you know what happened right there?
That officer bawled me out for a fare;
"What are you here for—I suppose you don't know?
Then before the O.C. I'll see you go."

"Sir, I have my orders; I know my work.
And a guard on duty must not shirk;
This is my front and that's the rear,
My beat extends from there to here.

In case of fire, I'm chiefly here
To alarm the guard, and all those near;
For further instructions, get the N.C.O.,
He's the guard who's supposed to know.
State your business and go your way
For on my beat you cannot stay.—"Good day."

"A FAVORITE DITTIE"

When you wore a tunic,
When you wore a tunic,
A bright khaki tunic
And some wore civilian clothes.
Some sat at desks all day,
Writing out checks to pay
The shirkers who would not go.
Then come all you young men,
Who are physically fit to join them,
Sign up and do you share;
You're country has clothed you and fed you,
And now let them send you;
They're needing you all out there.

“SACKVILLE”

—March 26th

The army life in Sackville,
Let me convince you all,
Is playing hide and seek with mumps.
And we'll play the game till fall.

One man gets the mumps, and then
We stay here just to see
If there won't be another case
To get our sympathy.

One hundred men consist the draft,
But it is subdivided ;
For since we came to Sackville,
Into sections it has glided.

The first click is the officers,
Who get our best respect ;
And if there's anything goes wrong,
They're there to that effect.

The next click is the “hang on” gang,
Who are getting on most grand ;
We wish them luck and all the stripes
The Q.M. stores can stand.

The last bunch is the scavengers,
On the shovels they do shine ;
They'll be the boys to hide the guns,
On the banks of the German Rhine.

When the country's call rings in your ear,
That men are needed far and near ;
Are all the men prepared to say :
“Why sure, I'll help to clear the way”?

Scare out that low down reprobate,
And help the world illuminate ;
It cannot shine till Germany
Is crushed right out of eternity.

Kaiser Bill has got the notion
That he'd like to run the ocean ;
But that notion up to date
Hasn't cost us yet our fate.

"COCKNEY and ROW"

Slim Row, the loft and lanky,
Is the battery's big man;
If he can't kill a German,
I'd like to know who can.

The next is Cockney Saunders,
Big Slim's trustworthy mate;
His vocal talent, I believe
Was the cause of Robert's fate.

These two good men from London came
Upon a cattle boat;
And when out on the ocean,
On a raft were cast afloat.

Three weeks the wind did toss them
Upon the foaming main;
Big Slim was near exhausted,
And Cockney was the same.

At last the raft was drifted
Up to the New York shore;
"Thank God," exclaimed poor Cockney,
"It's dry land I am sure."

Together they both landed,
And vainly they both sought
To find a man who'd give a meal
To fill their hollow spot.

At last Slim found a nickle,
Then the question was how they
Could both suffice their appetite,
And forward go their way.

So both together they pushed on
Till to the 'Peg they came;
And so they joined the battery,
To make well known their fame.

They now reside in Sackville,
And as chummy as before;
And if you can't see lofty Slim,
You can hear poor Cockney's roar.

"A BIRTHDAY AT SEA"

—April 16, 1917

It was a bright morn in April,
And 'twas calm as could be ;
Not a ripple was stirring
The bright, glassy sea.

I jumped from my bunk
And brushed back my hair ;
I thought I was grooming
I guess—the night mare.

Then up to the deck
I bounded in glee ;
For I wished for some fun
With a birthday at sea.

'Twas early morn and all was quiet
Up on the sunny bow ;
The only noise that could be heard
Was the seagulls'schreeching row.

It was on a big transport
Of Canadian boys ;
I was crossing the frog pond
Amid pleasure and joys.

We were crossing the ocean,
To aid the brave troops
Who had gaily gone forward,
Shouting merry war-whoops.

The whole voyage was a pleasure,
The wind hadn't blown ;
But now we were coming
To the submarine zone.

The boys were all warned
To keep still up on deck,
In assurance we wouldn't
Attract subs, and then—wreck.

There were many guards stationed
with rifles in hand ;
In case of disturbance
They could keep sole command.

But they didn't need rifles,
For the boys every one
Would bravely face danger
To encounter the Hun.

The Seventy-Sixth Battery,
Manned the big six-inch gun.
For the boys in that battery,
Are gunners, by gum.

And if there should come
A Hun submarine,
Those Seventy Sixth gunners
Would wipe her out clean.

But all through the day
No subs did appear,
For those Seventy-Sixth gunners
Filled the ocean with fear.

At four o'clock in the afternoon
The fire alarm did clang ;
"Up to the lifeboats, all of you!"
The voice of the captain rang.

The boys were all calm,
And the orders obeyed ;
So all got on deck,
And none were delayed.

And when all got on deck,
And quite free from harm
He politely did tell us,
'Twas mere false alarm.

We then had our supper,
And to finish the day,
We had a grand concert,
Of opera display.

Some day, eh?



“FROM LIVERPOOL TO SHORNCLIFFE”

—May 18th, 1917

It was the twenty-first of April,
 Into Liverpool we sailed ;
The submarines had sought us,
 But their efforts all had failed.

The bands were playing gaily,
 And all the boys did sing ;
For it seemed to make them happy,
 The sun's strong rays of spring.

All day we loafed and waited,
 About that great big dock ;
For the train that was to take us,
 Wasn't due till six o'clock.

All night we travelled on the train,
 Till four o'clock next morning ;
Then suddenly they put us off,
 Without a bit of warning.

The cold grey mists of morning,
 Hung low about the place ;
But soon we were all marching
 At a quick and warming pace.

As through the country roads we marched,
 And through each village street ;
The only noise that could be heard,
 Was the trampling of our feet.

Just as we neared our camping ground,
 The light began to dawn ;
The sun rose high up in the sky,
 And we heard a sky-lark's song.

Three weeks we stayed at Otterpool,
 They say its segregation ;
But the boys all seemed to think it was
 The camp of abstaination.

So next we came to Shorncliffe
And took up different training ;
But just as soon as we arrived,
It started in to raining.

My chum and I took signalling,
Till a boy in our tent
Got sick, and took the mumps and then
Into quarantine we went.

Now we're penned up for a month,
But our gang is hard to beat ;
We're always having lots of fun,
And getting lots to eat.

But when the P.T. sergeant
And instructors come around
To give us drill and exercise,
We're never to be found.

But let some mail or eats come in,
We greet it with a smile ;
You will not have to hunt us up,
We'll be here all the while.

"FRANCE"

—June 12th

When the fragrance of the trees
Comes floating o'er the breeze ;
And the little birds are singing up above,
When all the world is full of joy
And the heart of every boy
Is yearning for the one, his lady love.

It is then the time seems longer
And the fight is growing stronger
Than it ever seemed to be before ;
But he'll stick it to the finish,
And his love will not diminish,
For first he's got to end the blooming war.

“THE CALL TO ARMS”

—May 3rd, 1917

When this war roused our dander,
And we could no longer stander;
The boys all flocked to do their share,
And got a soldier's suit to wear.

At Sackville plains we had a skirmish,
It was a battle of the mumps;
Though the boys all fought most bravely,
Some sustained a few big lumps.

It took six weeks of fighting,
Amid the mud and clay;
Before we proved at Sackville plains,
That we had won the day,

With that triumphant victory,
Which six weeks' fighting won;
We sailed for merry England.
To train to fight the Hun.

We were just a day in England,
Till next we faced the foe;
But it just took three weary weeks,
Till we had them on the go.

It was on the plains of Otterpool,
When the morning mist did rise;
That we charged the full enemy force,
And took them by surprise.

We charged them, yes we charged them,
We charged the cook-house first;
For all the boys were hungry,
And we couldn't spit for thirst.

We all undone our mess tins,
And charged as best we could;
But all we got was bully beef,
Which was as dry as wood.

We carried out the onslaught,
And tried to take by force;
The canteen and its contents,
In which we failed of course.

They charged us, yes they charged us,
Well I should say they did.
A penny apiece for every bun,
And for cigarettes a quid.

Three weeks of fiercest fighting,
It's well-known to the nation ;
And it will go down in the books,
As the battle of segregation.

We next came up to Shorncliffe,
And I am glad to say :
That I have lived through all these scraps
To join this final fray.

We're quite content in this big fight,
In which we're all involved ;
Though victory's sure, it'll take a month
To get the blame thing solved.

And when this war is over,
And we have through the fighting been ;
There'll be those words marked in our minds :
The Battle of Quarantine.

“SCHOOL DAYS”

When we were kids and going to school,
It was the real time of our life ;
Little I thought we'd soon grow up,
Having to battle in this strife.

But times have changed for everyone ;
All we can do is look back on
Those happy days with all the fun ;
Will they return—those days that are gone?

For some they may, but others, alas—
They now soar up in realms above ;
They've paid supreme the sacrifice ;
Yes, paid it with their dying blood.

Oh wicked world—what have you done,
That peace eternal cannot reign ?
Bring us together, one by one,
To live real life just once again.

"AN AIR RAID IN ENGLAND"

—Blighty, May 26, 9117.

It was six twenty-five in the evening,
On the twenty-fifth of May;
We were quietly enjoying the coolness
After a long and sultry day.

When the silence was suddenly broken,
And well we all knew the sound;
It was the whir of the German aircraft,
They seemed to be all around.

Then the bombs start screaming downward,
All about us in numbers they fell;
It seemed for a couple of minutes.
We had suddenly been plunged in hell.

The shells flew in every direction,
And we all lie flat on the ground,
While those rough and jagged splinters,
Claimed their victims all around.

My chum was struck in the forehead,
Which killed him there and then;
While others got wounds in the legs and arms,
But quietly stood it like men.

While the wounded, dying victims
Lie groaning and distressed,
The other boys helped bravely
To get their wounds all dressed.

Our guns were trained upon them,
And our airmen gave them fight;
But the Huns had done their damage,
And so quickly took to flight.

But as the Huns sped homeward,
Over towns and camps they went;
Upon the babes and women they
Their high explosives spent.

Our boys brought down three Hun machines,
And we may safely say:
Before the rest got safely home,
They would have to fight their way.

“WILLIE’S WEDDING”

—France, Jan 15th

Once an ambitious young man
By the border of Saskatchewan,
He lived on a farm, his ambitions were high,
 He wanted a wife, to help him in life,
In whom he could trust and rely.

It didn’t take long,
 For the time seems to fly,
Till he met the right girl,
 And there anchored his eye

As love stories go,
 In the old usual way,
In a very short time,
 They had settled the day.

Then as the wedding day drew near,
 The fair and happy bride,
Departed to her mother’s home,
 For the wedding to provide.

The bridegroom all excited,
 A thought inspired his dome ;
So he took a trip to Winnipeg,
 To bring some presents home.

But on the morning of the day
 The wedding was to be,
He got so much excited,
 That he missed his train at three.

It was the last and only train
 Out-going west that day ;
Whatever was he going to do,
 And what would people say.

So another thought inspired his dome,
 For a Ford would make the trip,
If only he could give her juice,
 And she didn’t break or slip.

So he hired a taxi driver
 And tipped him to drive fast ;
For life and death it was to him,
 A fast ride or his last.

The hour set was drawing near,
The bride had all things ready ;
And as the time did speed along,
The guests kept coming steady.

One hour more—the bride exclaimed :
“Oh where, Oh where can he be?
I’m sure he will not fail to come,
For the hour set is three.”

A half hour more has gone,
The guests all started sighing ;
In fact her mother had a job,
To keep the bride from crying.

The windows were all open,
And the east wind blew a gale ;
Then all at once a Ford was heard,
A speeding up the trail.

The guests rushed to the window,
As the Ford sped to the door ;
The breathless bridegroom hailed the host,
Then fainted on the floor.

But in a few more minutes,
He was right as right could be ;
So the parson promptly carried on
With the marriage ceremony.

Then when the knot was firmly tied,
There came the best of all ;
The supper and the jubilee,
And toasts from big and small.

The honeymoon had long been planned,
So the happy pair departed,
To spend a week in Winnipeg,
Before the real life started.

When they got to Winnipeg,
They took in all the shows ;
They went to all the biggest feeds,
And what-not goodness knows.

But when the time, which quickly came,
For their honeymoon to cease ;
They both were so exhausted,
They were glad to stand at ease.

So homeward they, their faces turned,
 Right to the dear old farm,
Where they could live in happiness,
 And none could do them harm.

The minute they got in the house,
 No more for them to roam ;
They kissed each other and exclaimed :
 “Thank God that we are home.”

“SUPPOSITION”

—February 18th

All this war is but a play,
 Or as some men say, a scheme ;
And each fit man is a cog of the wheel,
 In this gruesome war machine.

Just like the seed of a freshly sown field,
 Where the birds all alight and devour ;
So the hell of this war devours the men,
 And continues to do so each hour.

And many times the battle field
 Is sown with seeds anew ;
But the reaper comes along too soon,
 And cuts the plants in two.

But some day, we all hope
 This world will awake
With such a big jerk
 It will make us all shake.

For war is far past
 Real civilized thoughts ;
And the causes of this
 Should be made draw their lots.

“THE LITTLE BELGIAN MAID”

—France, February 28

There was a little Belgian maid,
 All alone, out somewhere in France ;
To make her living as best she could,
 By hook or crook or chance.

Her home was destroyed by the Germans,
 And her people all slaughtered all dead ;
So she had been left all alone in the world,
 To strive for her own daily bread.

But this bright and fair little refugee,
 With all her hardships and trial,
Overlooked her sorrows and went about
 With a bright and beaming smile.

She was fairer than most refugees,
 Of either Belgium or France ;
In fact she seemed like a fairy,
 That had dropped out of heaven by chance.

Her bright blue eyes, like the sunlit skies,
 And her cheeks so rosy and fair ;
With her ruby lips, and pearly teeth,
 Seemed to match her flaxen hair.

With her quaint little ways and dimpled smile,
 That shone wherever she went ;
It wasn't long till she won many friends,
 Tho' to her were of foreign descent.

Now this dainty little refugee,
 Had a gift or an art of her own ;
Of making the loveliest Flemish lace
 We boys have ever sent home.

All day she would sit at her window,
 With her fingers going like fire ;
Designing the loveliest patterns,
 She never seemed to tire.

All day her fingers were dancing,
 The bobbins as tho' on a wire ;
And those who stopped to watch her,
 Couldn't help but her works admire.

Every day she was there at the window,
For she loved the sun's merry shine ;
Cheering the boys with her bright little smile
As forward they went up the line.

She made all the soldiers happy
With her smiles and clever art ;
She made them lace to send back home,
Each to their own sweetheart.

But one Canadian soldier boy
That was fighting in the strife ;
Well—I suppose he fell in love,
For now she is his wife.

So when this war is over,
And there is peace again,
He'll take her back to Canada,
Far from this land of stain.

"ALONE IN FRANCE"

What would you do if you were alone
In some foreign land far over the foam,
Far from the comforts of love and of life
Out midst the din of battle's strife,
Thinking of home and those dear to you,
Missing its warmth and its welcome too,
Courting death from a burning hell,
Treading the ground torn by shot and shell.
Gazing afar over wastes of ground
Where the remains of the missing lie scattered around ;
It's then that you realize the sweetness of life,
And wish you were far from the din and the strife,
For 'tis then that you think of your God up above,
And pray for the safety of the dear ones you love.

"THE BATTERY O.P."

Cramped in a crumbling dugout,
 Adjoining no man's land,
Chilled to the bone I squat at a phone
 That sits on a sand bag stand ;
My ticker points to midnight,
 I've two more hours to do,
And keeping awake would wreck the cake,
 From the torture Tantulus knew.

'Tis here the eyes of the battery
 Detect the Hun at work ;
And targets fair, we phone to where
 Our eighteen-pounders lurk.
Then shoals of high explosives
 Frustate the plans of Fritz ;
Who runs to ground, as promptly pound
 His parapet to bits.

When Tommy in the trenches
 Is suffering special hell,
From whizz bang, mine and five-point nine
 Turnip and tear shell ;
He calls for retaliation,
 And our waiting gunners know,
When we pass that through, the devils due
 To more than a quid pro quo.

It's up to us the peeping
 At Fritz through a periscope,
Likewise we go a-creeping
 And out in the darkness grope ;
For the break where a bursting johnson
 Has cut our telephone wire,
Whilst the peeved O.C. of the infantry
 Is calling for our battery fire.

Cramped in a crumbling dugout,
 Too near to no man's land,
To be without a lingering doubt
 As to how your home would stand ;
A coal box spilt upon it
 And liquid fire rain ;
Hello ! Hello ! Gee Whiz—Hello !
 The wire is out again.

"HIS LAST ERRAND"

—February 15th, 1918

A runner once, in the infantry,
A bright lad of eighteen years ;
But of death or the hell of battles,
To him unknown were fears.

A heavy barrage hung low all day,
And the strength of the line was fading ;
The communications had all been cut,
And Fritz was starting his raiding.

"This barrage is hell," the officer cried,
"We must have help from the rear ;
Here is a message for brigade,
To take it, who'll volunteer?"

At once this young and worthy lad
Stepped out and said : "I'll try ;
They can't do more than kill me,
And I'm not afraid to die."

Down through the muddy trench he went,
And the barrage was thick ahead ;
So he inspired a little thought,
To cross a field instead.

But as he climbed the blood-stained wall,
Of the fateful muddy drains,
A bullet struck him in the leg,
And tore away the veins.

He tried his best to tie it up.
But the blood still spurted out ;
There wasn't any help in sight,
And it was no use to shout.

His one thought was his errand,
While wounded there he lay ;
He was not thinking of himself,
As his life's blood ebbed away.

His thoughts were turned to mother,
His only care on earth ;
For her, he yearned, whilst dying,
Her lasting love since birth.

He felt in all his pockets,
As he lie 'twixt life and death,
For a pen to write to his mother,
E'er he drew his last long breath.

He found his pen was missing,
But his efforts not all in vain ;
He took a match, and with his blood
On the paper made this stain :

"Dear Mother," he wrote, "I am dying.
And haven't much time now to say ;
But God bless you all—I will meet you
In a happier place some day."

His letter was never finished,
Though hard he had fought and tried ;
The brave lad's blood had ebbed away,
And there he had fainted and died.

Next morning his comrades found him,
In the shell torn bit of land ;
But their hardened hearts were softened,
With the letter in his hand.

The mother received his last letter,
And an obituary note from his mate,
Telling how bravely he'd given his life,
To save his dear comrades from fate.

"THOUGHTS OF MOTHER"

Tho' battle calls me from thy arms,
Let not my dear old mother mourn ;
Tho' cannons roar, yet safe from harms,
I shall to my dear one return.
Love turns aside the shells that round me
fly,
Lest precious tears should drop from moth-
er's eye.

"RUM UP"

—March 12, 1918

Between the dark and daylight,
When the shadows begin to lower ;
Comes the time of our greatest excitement,
'Tis known as the rum-up hour.

It is then we all flock to the O.C.'s mess,
With a cup or a tin in our hand ;
To draw our scanty stimulant.
Which is more than we sometimes can
stand.

But like everything else,
It varies a great deal ;
For we sometimes get rum,
And sometimes a spiel.

But "cela ne fait rien,"
Whether it's big or it's small ;
We are there on the spot.
When we get the rum call.

But you always will find,
In that rum line-up stunt,
That the headquarters party
Are always in front.

Though we like a big issue
We never do try,
To pull off that stuff
On the "you know" guy.

So when we get plenty,
I suppose we look crude ;
For we are surely some bunch,
When we get partly stewed.

It is jake for the linesmen.
Who can sleep all the night ;
But for us guys on the night shift,
It isn't so bright

Sing me to sleep in some old shed,
A dozen rat holes around my head ;
Dark is my dugout, cold my feet,
With nothing but bully and biscuits to eat ;
So orderly sergeant sing me to sleep.

"THE DAWN OF SPRING"

—March 21st, 1918

It was five a m. in the morning,
On the first spring day of the year ;
I sat in my observing position,
As the daylight faintly drew near.

My eyes were watchful for movement,
But my mind was far from that thing ;
I was thinking of something much dearer,
The warmth and the welcome of spring.

Far out o'er the eastern horizon,
The sun showed its bright golden gleam ;
Casting its silvery shadows along
The sky, the hillside and stream.

The mist in the valley began to rise,
And things seemed to stir everywhere ;
'Twas the anxious hour for the Wily Hun,
As he shot up his last odd flare.

The sun rose high up in the sky,
The flowers one by one opened wide ;
The little birds sang of the spring-time love,
That love which they could not hide.

The pussy willows were budding out,
The rooks flapped about in the sky ;
And one could tell they had come to stay,
By their searching excited cry.

The grass was all sprinkled with dewdrops,
Which glittered and sparkling run,
Like one huge field of diamonds,
Lit up by the golden sun

It seemed to bring the goodly cheer,
That comes with every spring ;
For the boys went whistling up the line,
Forgetting the war's bitter sting.

On the topmost peak of that famous ridge,
Which our boys so gallantly won ;
I was sitting admiring the dawn of spring,
Enjoying the rapturous sun.

As I looked down over the valley,
O'er the hillside so rent and torn ;
And the shell scorched, barren, rugged stumps,
That stood out alone full of scorn .

It seemed as tho' man had done his worst,
To rob her most beauteous share ;
But Mother Earth was working hard,
Restoring her splendor so fair.

For those once cold sullen shell holes,
That cast out a gloomy stare,
Are now clothed in moss and violets,
She has sprinkled most everywhere.

So let us not try to rob nature,
But instead do all that we can
To preserve the beauty of Mother Earth,
That was sent for the pleasure of man.

“ALL FROM CANADA”

We are all the way from Canada,
To stand in these trenches of mud ;
To justify the rights of those
Your swords did stain with blood.

You murdered babes and women,
And wherever that you could,
You pillaged every happy home
That before you helpless stood.

You trampled o'er poor Belgium,
As tho' she were a track ;
And ruthlessly destroyed her gems
When they tried to hold you back.

So now we're to the rescue,
Out amongst the wire and mud ;
So Fritzie keep your head down,
For now we're out for blood.

"TRYING TO WRITE A LETTER TO HOME"

When you're sitting in an estaminet,
 Trying to write an odd line
To your dear ones far over the water,
 You surely have some hard time.

In a corner where a group of Frenchmen,
 Who seem to be having a race ;
Are parley-vouing the ding-dong,
 And they're surely going some pace.

While the rest of the boys in the other
 Who are feeling rather gay,
Are having a small celebration,
 'Cause it's the twenty-fourth of May.

The organ which stands in the other,
 And runs when you feed it a coin,
Makes such an unearthly clatter,
 You can hardly make your thoughts join.

In the last corner stands the booze counter,
 And the Madamoiselles, full of joy,
Banging the bottles and glasses about,
 As they hand out the wink to each boy.

Then a guy with an odd spare penny,
 Who seems to be glad of the chance,
Again starts the noisy old organ,
 And clears the floor for a dance.

Like cats and dogs its raining outside,
 And your billets are cold and dark ;
So how is a fellow, in this dizzy world,
 To keep his mail up to the mark ?

Just one more kit inspection,
 Only one more church parade,
Only one more marching order,
 Then we'll chase the first brigade.

“CIGARETTES”

When the cold is making ice cream
 Of the marrow in your bones ;
When you're shaking like a jelly
 And your feet are dead as stones ;
When your clothes and boots and blankets
 And your rifle and your kit
Are soaked from hell to breakfast ;
 And the dug-out where you sit
Is leaking like a basket, and
 Upon the muddy floor
The water lies in filthy pools,
 Six inches deep or more ;
Tho' life seems cold and mis'rable
 And all the world is wet,
You'll always get through somehow
 If you've got a cigarette.

When you're lying in a listening-post,
 Way out beyond the wire,
While a blasted Hun, behind a gun
 Is doing rapid fire ;
When the bullets whine above your head
 And splutter on the ground ;
When your eyes are strained for every move
 And your ears for every sound ;
You'd bet your life a Hun patrol
 Is prowling somewhere near ;
A shiver runs along your spine
 That's very much like fear—
You'll stick it to the finish, but
 I'll make you a little bet :
You'd feel a whole lot better if
 You had a cigarette.

When Fritz is starting something,
 And his guns are on the bust ;
When the parapet goes up in chunks
 And settles down in dust,
When the roly-poly “rum-jar” comes
 A wabbling thro' the air,
Till it lands upon the dug-out
 And the dug-out isn't there ;
When the air is full of dust and smoke
 And scraps of steel and noise,
And you think you're booked for golden
 Crowns and other heavenly joys ;
When your nerves are all a-tremble
 And your brain is all a-fret,
It isn't half so hopeless
 If you've got a cigarette.

When your waiting for the whistle,
And your foot is on the step,
You bluff yourself it's lots of fun,
And all the time you're hept
To the fact that you may stop one
'Fore you've gone a dozen feet,
And you wonder what it feels like
And your thoughts are far from sweet ;
Then you think about a little grave
With R.I.P. on top,
And you know you've got to go across
Although you'd like to stop ;
When your backbone's limp as water,
And you're bathed in icy sweat,
Why, you'll feel a lot more cheerful
If you puff your cigarette.

Then when you stop a good one,
And the stretcher bearers come
And patch you up with strings and
Splints, and bandages and gum,
When you think you've got a million wounds
And fifty thousand breaks,
And your body's just a blasted sock
Packed full of pains and aches ;
Then you feel you've reached the finish,
And you're sure your number's up
And you feel as weak as Belgian beer
And helpless as a pup ;
But you know that your not down
And out ; that life's worth living yet
When some old war-wise Red Cross
Guy, slips you a cigarette.

We can do without Maconachies,
And bully and hard tack,
When Fritz's curtain fire keeps
The ration parties back ;
We can do without our great coats,
And our socks and shirts and shoes ;
We might almost—though I doubt it—
Get along without our booze ;
We can do without "K.R.S.O." and
Military law ;
We can beat the ancient Israelites
At making bricks and straw ;
We can do without a lot of things,
And still win out, you bet.
But I'd hate to think of soldiering
Without a cigarette.

"FED UP"

—France, March 4th

Oh, take me back to Canada,
To the little town of Elkhorn;
The best little place in all this world,
The place where I was born.

Like many other crazy guys,
It was too dull for me;
I wanted to explore the world,
And sail across the sea.

There in my happy little home.
Where life went free with ease;
Where hardships were unknown to me,
And I did just as I please

Where I had all the comforts
That any home could give;
But then I wasn't satisfied,
With the place where I did live.

To me the place seemed dismal,
And the people seemed so slow;
There wasn't dancing every night,
Or else a brilliant show.

And then there was another thing,
Far o'er across the sea;
The noise and roar of the battlefield,
Seemed ever calling me.

So one bright winter's morning,
What do you think I done?
I went and joined the army
For to sometime strafe the Hun.

But now I've sailed the ocean,
And I've seen the battlefield;
I know the hell of shot and shell,
And it's ever heaping yield.

I've seen enough of England,
And I've seen beaucoupe of France;
I've seen enough of the strafing Hun,
And brilliant shows and dance.

I've seen enough of fighting.
And I've seen enough of hell;
I've seen enough of everything,
In fact I'm fed up well.

So now I've had enough of it,
And care no more to roam;
You can take me back there any time,
To my dear little home sweet home.

"THEY ANSWERED THE CALL"

They came in their splendid batteries,
When the motherland gave the sign ;
From ranch and orchard and farmland,
From factory, office and mine.

From the land of the warm-hued maple leaf,
And the flaming golden rod ;
Where a man stakes all on the task in hand,
And gives his soul to God.

Oh torn and broken batteries,
When you've played your splendid part,
You will take back there to your homeland
A bit of old England's heart

In the land of the warm-hued maple leaf,
And the flaming golden rod ;
We shall face with you the task in hand,
And leave the rest to God.

Verdant in spring-time infancy,
And golden-red in weeping fall ;
Is not our tender maple leaf,
The fairest emblem of them all?

If each little inspiration,
And each bright and happy thought,
Were jotted down and carried out,
It would help this world a lot.

These gifts are for a purpose,
And these bright thoughts for a use ;
So cultivate what's given you,
Or else 'tis mere abuse.

Thou careless awake,
Thou peacemaker fight ;
Stand, Canada for honor.
And God guard the right.

"A PARCEL FROM HOME"

—February 14th

When Sid comes in, with a smile on his face

 And a parcel half hidden from sight;

He smiles a mile, as the boys all shout:

 "There's going to be eats tonight."

Then good old Sid, with his happy smile,

 Explains to his pals all about,

That a kindly lady from Lethbridge

 Had sent the parcel out.

So Sid soon borrowed a jack-knife,

 Of course all were anxious to lend

A hand to our faithful comrade,

 To get the parcel opened.

Soon he displayed a fine fruit-cake,

 Done up in a nice little tin;

And the way we boys all enjoyed it,

 To tell you, I can't begin

But I'll say this much for the lady,

 Who sent that nice parcel out here,

We boys, to her are most grateful,

 And wish her a Happy New Year.

"MIDST SHRAPNEL and SMOKE"

Alone in the midst of war's desolation

 The linesman crawls out to mend up the break,

While on all sides the whining of shells that are missing,

 The whole earth and sky in a tremulous wake.

It sure is no joke, midst the shrapnel and smoke,

 Out midst the mud and the mire;

Seeking a break, where a Johnson did take

 A chunk from the newly-laid wire.

He faces the danger with only one spirit,

 Which service permits him to think;

For on him depends the lives of his comrades,

 So from it he never must shrink.

“ON VIMY RIDGE”

I can stand and look around me,
O'er these desecrated plains ;
There is naught but trash and ruin
Where once grew golden grains.

There's miles of tangled wire and steel,
There's graves and graves galore ;
And white pine crosses show me where
Men fought and died by score.

Men who gave up all they had,
Home, kindred, health and life ;
To fight because kings willed it so,
And not for love of strife.

There's miles and miles of trenches ;
There's dugouts cold and grim ;
There's hills and valleys, roads and swamp
That have echoed battles din.

There are houses wrecked and crumbled,
There are churches, too, defiled ;
And round them all, with graves between
The poppies growing wild.

Poppies red as the human blood
That once ran 'neath their roots ;
As tho' their bloom had ne'er been seared
By hordes of tramping boots.

There's poppies by the roadside,
There's poppies everywhere ;
On hill, in dale, in trenches grim
Their fragrance fills the air.

It almost looks to me as if
Dame nature in her love
Had placed these poppies here to bloom.
For souls now gone above.

The husk of him who lies beneath
This poppy covered sod,
Has sent his soul to realms above
With this message to his God :

If Thou, O Lord, can'st look down on
This shell-torn wretched land,
Strike down this monstrous fiend
Called war ; send forth thine anger
To help humanity atone [grim
It's everlasting sin.

"CHRISTMASTIDE"

—France, 1917

Sing me a song of the winter time,
When the blustering north winds blow ;
And the forest boughs are deep with rime,
And the fields with drifting snow.
Sing me a song of the frosty air,
And the long nights white and still ;
Where the great stars gleam of the northern bear,
And the round moon rises cold and fair,
O'er the crest of the old grit hill.

Sing me a song of the Christmas time,
And the morning of blessed birth
When the resonant bells accordant chime
Their message of joy on earth.
Sing me a song of the princely art
Of the bounteous hand benign,
That blesses unseen, unguessed, apart
The outcast fate of some hopeless heart,
With a grace of a gift divine.

Sing me a song of the poplar bluffs,
The places I've tramped and tread ;
Of the festooned wall of the festive hall,
And the mistletoe overhead.
Sing me a song of the ample cheer,
And the laughter running free ;
When the heart emboldened, forgets to fear,
Forgiving the faults of the waning year,
And blessing the one to be.

Sing me a song of the old feeder's blaze,
And the homemade cakes and wine ;
Of the romping game and dances gay,
And the eyes that sparkling shine.
Sing me a song of the dear old place,
And the starlit sky above ;
Of the moonlit roads, and old "Robin's" pace,
Of the snow covered way I again want to trace,
And the heart adream with love.

"IN A DUGOUT"

—France, Feb. 25, 1918

Down in a dark little cellar,
With nothing but a candle for light ;
Full of fowl air most everywhere,
And rats by day and night.

Where the candle flickers queer shadows,
As across the dugout they fall ;
And the squirming rats do gnaw and fight,
As they creep about the wall.

Where you lie in your itchy little bunk,
Pondering o'er vacant space ;
When all at once you jump with a start,
As a rat runs across your face.

Where the shrapnel bursts about the door,
And the gas lies thick each night ;
Where you have to keep your lizzie near,
And your curtain fastened tight.

Where the shells burst about,
And you wonder just when
One will land on the roof,
And cave in your den.

Where the people by day
Dare not venture far out ;
But like the beasts of the fields,
In the night rove about.

They say life is sweet,
But when fed much of that,
You soon feel lower
Than a dugout rat.

This is what's war,
We who bear it will say ;
And we'll surely rejoice
When comes the last day.

Go up with Christ your head,
Your captain's footsteps see ;
Follow your captain and be led
To certain victory.

"THOUGHTS OF HOME"

As I sit and munch my hardtack,

 My thoughts begin to roam,
And I just imagine I'm talkin' to
 The dear old folks at home.

It's just ten to eleven,

 They'll all be going to bed—
Handing round the tea and cake,
 And the good old homemade bread

I can picture them there all sitting

 'Round the welcome old feeder's glare,
And here I'm stuck in a dugout grim,
 Miles from God knows where.

I know they'll be talkin' about me,

 For they miss me I'm sure, over there ;
And I'll bet that my dear old mother to-night
 For me says a nice little prayer.

I can shut my eyes and imagine

 I'm with them, till a screeching shell
Sends a chill that tickles my backbone
 And tells me I'm right back in hell.

Down in the Souchey valley,

 Where the little brook bubbles and flows,
Carrying its sadness of the years before,
 Cheerfully away as it goes.

On either side of the little stream,

 Slope the hills and majestically rise,
Reflecting their splendor in the stream below,
 As tho' proud of their glory and size.

Except for the laughter of the little brook,

 Or the birds singing up overhead,
The valley is robed in the stillness of death,
 For 'tis here the French buried their dead.

The little brick bridge,

 So quaint but shell torn,

Which stands by the church,

 Two wrecks, full of scorn.

"OUT ON REST"

—Feb. 16.

In the little French village of Marles,
A few miles back of the line,
Our battery was out of action,
Having rest there at the time.

Our horse lines were very convenient,
But our billets a shaky old shed,
So the boys all invested their money
In comfortable billets instead.

Things went along very nicely,
But "Stowie," our man with the horse,
Had a difficult job at reveille
To get them all wakened each morn.

Each morning our boots were all polished,
And our buttons, each one shone like gold ;
In fact, 'twas a real snappy outfit—
But that—we never were told.

One day we all dashed into action
On the battlefield of Auchell ;
A thick barrage of steel hung low—
To tell you real facts—it was hell.

As usual our firing was snappy
And our casualties considerably light ;
We just got our harness and wagons all mud,
As we beat it away from the fight.

Next morning the heroes all lined on parade,
As the major shouted attention,
The G.O.C. is coming to-day,
So get things fit for inspection.

The boys buckled in and all worked hard
To get all the things straightened out,
But much to their expecting disgust—
Their reward was a mere bawling out.

But the bawling out no doubt took effect,
For the guns were all shined bright and
slick ;
The guard was mounted with rifles at five,
And each movement was done with a click

“SOME RAID”

—March 9th

One day our colonel planned a raid,
To capture Fritzie's back pile ;
And the way it all was carried out,
Sure made it look worth while.

The odds were much against us,
Having no-man's land so wide ;
So first we put up a smoke barrage,
Behind which the raiders could hide.

At five o'clock our boys all crept
Far out beyond the wire ;
And patiently they waited till
The batteries opened fire.

At half past five, up on the ridge
A flare lit up the sky ;
Then all in one harmonious crack
Answered the guns in one reply.

The raiders, too, with the signal flare
Had soon their objectives all won ;
And were beating it back over no-man's land,
Each with a captured Hun.

The raid was most successful,
And our casualties very slight ;
So the Tenth Brigade are there with the goods,
And we'll pull it again some night.

“A FRUIT-CAKE”

When a fruit cake lands in the company
Of a bunch of boys in France,
You ought to hear the way they shout
And jump about and dance.

So the dugout's pretty noisy,
For the boys are mad with glee ;
For they love to get a fruit cake
From home across the sea.

“ADVICE TO MOTHER”

Smile, Mother, Smile,
I know it's hard to do,
But the only way in these tough times
Is to smile the whole day through.

For if you let your worries slide
And smile the whole day through,
Soon you'll see the sunny side
Is far the best for you.

For worry makes your hair go gray,
And once it's gray it stays ;
So smile and save the hair tonic cash,
I think you'll find it pays.

Although I'm always feeling jake,
I'm always looking to
The time when I'll be going back,
To stay at home with you.

“THE SUICIDE CREW”

One night in a forty foot dugout
With only one hole for a door,
Where the fungus clung to the soggy beams,
And the wet oozed out of the floor.

Ladened with germs the foul air,
As in some old rotten well,
Where ventilation was trodden down
And blocked by a German shell.

With the filth predominating,
Where disease untouched reigned high ;
But seeking shelter, four of us
Sought this place in which to lie.

Next morning three were unconscious,
Overcome by the odoriferous smell ;
But the other lad soon got them out
And had them once more looking well.

"MOORE BARRACKS HOSPITAL"

When I first fell and hurt my foot,
I cursed the stump and said :
"Of course it's just my very luck
To have to stay in bed."

When I first paraded sick
I could not on it tread ;
But the M.O. told me plump and plain
It's trying to sling the lead.

Then he sent me to this ward,
And now I bless the day.
When first I fell and cursed the stump
That happened in my way.

For ever since I came in here
I can't begin to tell,
The way the sisters use me
It certainly is swell.

But sadly when the time doth come
For me to pack and go,
If I don't have a relapse
I surely will be slow.

It was the magic of your smile,
First made life seem to me worth while ;
Which brought home all my faults to me
And made me think of what might be.

Then love for you aroused my soul
To seek ambition's highest goal ;
My self respect it did restore,
Alas—this one thing I deplore.

It matters not how hard the fight
That I will make to come out right ;
But now in spite of what I'll do,
It would all be just as naught to you.

You do not love me, that I know,
For often you have told me so ;
But if I stick and do not quit,
Perhaps you'll really care a bit.

(When I am free.)



